

NCA
VOC FOR IOP/FN
BACKGROUNDER NO. 5-5688
DOLPH HAERING/MUNICH

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BULGARIAN DISSIDENTS

ANNCR:

THE VIENNESE DAILY "DIE PRESSE" HAS PUBLISHED A HUMAN RIGHTS DOCUMENT REPORTEDLY WRITTEN BY BULGARIAN DISSIDENT INTELLECTUALS IN PROTEST AGAINST VIOLATION OF CIVIL LIBERTIES IN THEIR COUNTRY. VOA'S DOLPH HAERING HAS THIS BACKGROUND REPORT.

VOICE:

UNTIL NOW, BULGARIAN HAS BEEN THE ONLY EAST EUROPEAN COUNTRY WITHOUT A NOTICEABLE HUMAN RIGHTS MOVEMENT. BULGARIAN STATE AND PARTY CHIEF TODOR ZHIVKOV EARLIER THIS YEAR ACKNOWLEDGED FOR THE FIRST TIME THE EXISTENCE OF WHAT HE CALLED A "FEW POTENTIAL DISSIDENTS". BUT HE SAID DISSENT WAS NOT A POLITICAL FACT IN THE COUNTRY.

BULGARIA IS GENERALLY RECOGNIZED AS A MAJOR STRONGHOLD OF ORTHODOX COMMUNISM. AND OF ALL EAST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES, IT IS THE COUNTRY ON WHICH MOSCOW HAS THE FIRMEST GRIP. TIGHT DOMESTIC CONTROLS GIVE POTENTIAL HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS EVEN LESS LEEWAY THAN THOSE IN THE EAST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES. IN ADDITION, WESTERN EXPERTS POINT OUT THAT IN POLAND AND CZECHOSLOVAKIA, FOR EXAMPLE, THE CATHOLIC CHURCH PLAYS A CONSIDERABLE ROLE IN THE FIGHT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS. IN CONTRAST, THEY SAY, THE GREEK-ORTHODOX CHURCH IN BULGARIA, HOWEVER, CAN BE EXCLUDED AS A POLITICAL FACTOR.

FOR THESE REASONS, SOME WESTERN OBSERVERS ARE SKEPTICAL ABOUT THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE BULGARIAN DISSIDENT DECLARATION. THEY SAY IT WOULD REQUIRE EXTREME COURAGE IN BULGARIA TO ORGANIZE A DISSIDENT MOVEMENT. OTHERS, BELIEVING THE DOCUMENT TO BE AUTHENTIC, CLAIM THAT'S WHY THE DECLARATION WAS NOT SIGNED.

THERE HAVE BEEN ISOLATED CASES BORDERING ON DISSENT :
BULGARIAN WRITERS HAVE REPORTEDLY REFUSED TO DENOUNCE SOVIET
EXILED WRITER ALEXANDER SOLZHENITZYN; OTHERS APPARENTLY HAVE
RUN INTO DIFFICULTIES AFTER SUPPORTING THE CZECHOSLOVAK HUMAN
RIGHTS MOVEMENT CHARTER SEVENTY-SEVEN. OTHER REPORTS HAVE SPOKEN
OF TWENTY-EIGHT THOUSAND POLITICAL PRISONERS IN BULGARIA. AND AN
EXILED BULGARIAN CLAIMS THAT THERE ARE SEVEN PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITALS
IN BULGARIA WHERE POLITICAL PRISONERS ARE DETAINED. BUT NONE OF
THIS HAS BEEN DOCUMENTED, AND THERE HAVE BEEN DOUBTS ABOUT THE
ACCURACY OF SOME REPORTS.

WESTERN OBSERVERS, BELIEVING IN THE AUTHENTICITY OF
"DECLARATION SEVENTY-EIGHT", SEE A LEGALLY EXPERIENCED MIND BEHIND
THE DECLARATION'S FORMULATIONS. THEY SAY IT'S ALL IN LINE WITH THE
HELSINKI ACCORD, AND COMPARABLE WITH CHARTER SEVENTY-SEVEN. THEY
CALL IT A FIRST SUBSTANTIAL SIGNAL OF A BULGARIAN DISSIDENT
MOVEMENT....A PHASE IN A PROCESS THAT HAS LONG SMOULDERED UNDER THE
SURFACE IN BULGARIA.

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